SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Sir, the Minister has said that we have a shortage of coal and the Ministry is trying to increase the production of coal by various methods. I would like to know from the Minister whether he is aware of the fact that in Jharia, a large part of the coal is being burnt underground. The fire has been going on for the last fifty, sixty years. The Minister also referred to the Central Coal Fields Limited, which according to him, are the oldest mines. There also, a large part of the coal mines is burning. I would like to know whether any steps are being taken by the Government to see that the fire is extinguished and the coking coal can be produced in a large quantity in the CCL because a large number of coal reserves are still there. What is being done to raise the coal in these areas?

SHRI DILIP RAY: Sir, I did not say that there is shortage of coal. I said that we are trying to meet the demand, and as per the demand, we are raising the coal. So far as the question of fire in Jharia and the CCL is concerned, I would like to inform the House that it is not only fifty, sixty years old but the fire in Jharia and the CCL is more than ninety years old. We have already taken certain steps to control it. We have got a foreign expert to do a study on it. We have already started spending money on this to see to it that this fire is controlled.

SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Sir, unfortunately, the same answer has been given by the Minister in the past also.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question, No. 363.

Withdrawal of Defence PSUs from Disinvestment Commission

†*363. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Four defence PSUs withdrawn from Disinvestment Commission" appearing in the Hindu, dated the 12th November, 1997; and

(b) if so, the reasons for which the PSUs are being referred to Disinvestment Commission without consulting the concerned administrative Ministries, management and workers;

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) At the time of referring PSEs to the Disinvestment Commission, it is not considered necessary to consult administrative Ministries as the Commission, after examination, may not recommend disinvestment in a particular PSE. At the time of processing the recommendations of the Disinvestment Commission for acceptance, the administrative Ministry and Management of the PSE concerned are duly consulted and their views considered.

Disinvestment by PSUs

†*376. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of PSUs that have been identified for disinvestment by the Disinvestment Commission;

(b) whether Government have in principle agreed on the recommendations of Disinvestment Commission;

(c) whether the Disinvestment Commission has the right to monitor the disinvestment or it is only a recommending body; and

(d) whether Government will consider giving statutory power to the Commission to monitor disinvestment?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) 29 Public Sector Enterprises have been identified for disinvestment so far by the Disinvestment Commission.

(b) The recommendations are examined by the Government for

† Starred Questions Number 363 and 376 were taken together.